Terracon
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January 10, 2008

Ms. Kay Hindes, Senior Planner
City of San Antonio Development and Business Services Center
Planning & Community Development Department, Historic Preservation Division
1901 South Alamo Street
San Antonio, TX 78204

Re: Archaeological Backhoe Survey
Proposed Embassy Suites Hotel
Soledad Street and East Houston Street
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas
Terracon Project No. 90077109

Dear Ms. Hindes:

Pursuant to your request, Terracon has completed an Archaeological Backhoe Survey for the proposed Embassy Suites site to determine the presence of pre-1870 artifacts and deposits.

A file and records review identified no recorded archaeological sites within the project area. Two archaeological sites were recorded outside the project area. However, they will not be disturbed. Therefore, no known archeological sites would be affected by the proposed project.

Eight backhoe trenches were excavated to determine the presence of pre-1870 artifacts and deposits. Artifacts observed are consistent with a late 19th and 20th century date. No pre-1870 archaeological materials were discovered from any of the trenches. Therefore, Terracon recommends no further archaeological study of the project area at this time.

Terracon appreciates the opportunity to be of service. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,
Terracon

Christopher P. Koch, Ph.D., R.P.A.
Senior Archaeologist

for S. Lorraine Norwood, M.A., R.P.A.
CRM/NEPA Group Leader

ABSTRACT

Archaeological Backhoe Survey for the Proposed Embassy Suites Hotel, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. By Christopher P. Koch, Terracon, 2855 Premiere Parkway, Suite C, Duluth, Georgia, Project No. 90077109

An archaeological backhoe survey of an approximately 0.81-ha tract of land was conducted to determine the presence of pre-1870 artifacts and deposits. It is proposed that the tract be developed with a riverfront hotel, to be located between Travis Street to the north, the San Antonio River Walk to the east, East Houston Street to the south, and Soledad Street to the west in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The project area is currently developed with a paved parking lot.

A file and records review was conducted prior to commencing fieldwork. This review identified no recorded archaeological sites located within the project area. Two archaeological sites were recorded outside of the project area. However they will not be disturbed. Therefore, no known archeological sites would be affected by the proposed project.

Eight backhoe trenches were excavated to varying depths of 2.6 m to 8 m. Site stratigraphy is composed of five strata. Stratum 1 is a surficial layer of asphalt and concrete. Stratum 2 is a level of pink very coarse limestone gravel fill. Stratum 3 is a layer of black asphalt paving. The fourth stratum is a diverse collection of multiple demolition and burial episodes of what is primarily 19th and 20th century debris. Stratum 5 is a homogenous layer of very dark greenish gray *in situ* sterile alluvial clay.

Artifacts observed are consistent with a late 19th and 20th century date. No pre-1870 archaeological materials were discovered from any of the trenches.

Terracon recommends no further archaeological study of the project area at this time.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all those that assisted with this project. Our client Dan Briggs arranged for the excavating equipment. Don Frazier, Terracon Atlanta office, assisted with the fieldwork. Joe Lambert, Sam Escobar, Julio Aguilar, and Chris DeGroff of the San Antonio Terracon office helped on site and with logistics. Ben Paschal of Zachry Construction provided assistance on site. Scott Thomas of M & M Excavation Services operated the Dynamic Acera Hydraulic Excavator. The project scope of work was a collaborative effort by Kay Hinds, David Martin, and Herb Uecker. Lorraine Norwood and Sarah Gaudette, from the Atlanta Terracon office, provided technical review and drafting services respectively.

I. INTRODUCTION

Project Background

Terracon Consultants, Inc. (Terracon) was contracted by Rio Blanco Ltd (Rio Blanco) in April 2007 to conduct an archaeological backhoe survey of an approximately 0.81-ha (2-acre) tract of land to determine the presence of pre-1870 artifacts and deposits. It is proposed that the tract be developed with an Embassy Suites riverfront hotel, which will be located between Travis Street to the north, the San Antonio River Walk to the east, East Houston Street to the south, and Soledad Street to the west in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (see Figures 1 and 2). The project area is currently developed with a paved parking lot. The historic San Antonio River Walk, composed of a retaining wall, a cantilevered sidewalk, a river level sidewalk, and public stairway, is located adjacent to the east of the project area.

Rio Blanco (Mr. Daniel M. Briggs) and Terracon (Mr. David Martin) contacted the San Antonio Historic Preservation Office (SAHPO) prior to the commencement of this survey. Ms. Kay Hinds of the SAHPO pointed out that the project area was a part of the area occupied or traveled through during the Siege of Béxar in 1835 by the Tejano/Texian army and that there is the possibility that artifacts from that period may be located within the project area.

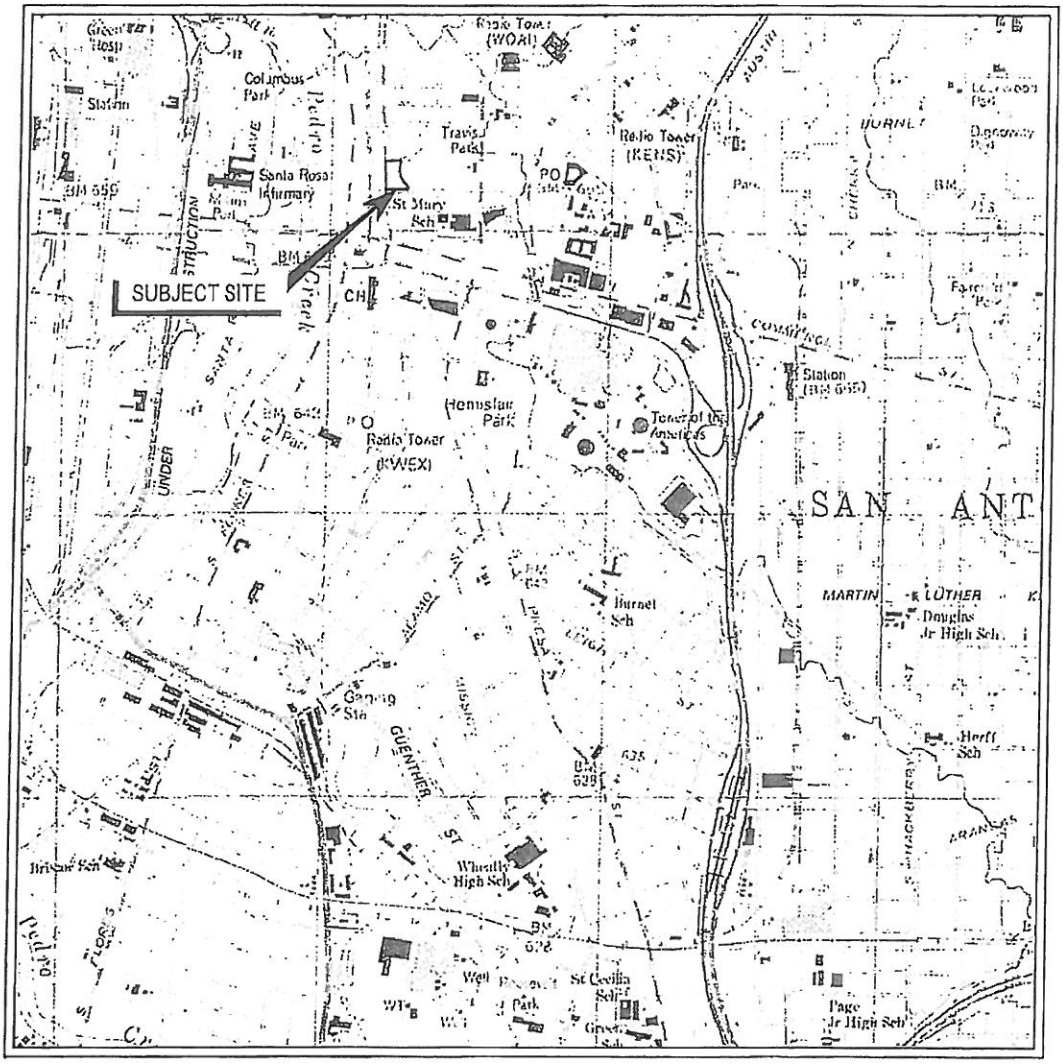
Ms. Hinds suggested that a limited number of backhoe trenches be placed within the project area to determine the probability of the existence of pre-1870s deposits. It was concluded in further consultation with SAHPO, carried out by Mr. Herbert G. Uecker of South Texas Archaeological Research Services, LLC (STARS), that six backhoe trenches would be placed in areas that were least likely to have been disturbed by post-1870s construction activities (see Figure 3).

Project Area

The project area is located in Bexar County in downtown San Antonio, Texas in an area south of the Balcones Escarpment of the Edwards Plateau. Natural soils in the project area are of the Frio-Trinity association. These soils occur on the flood plains along the San Antonio River and the Medina River and their main tributaries. The soils are deep, dark colored clay loams and clays that are developing in alluvium. Most of the association is nearly level, but some areas along deeply entrenched streams are gently sloping (Taylor *et al.* 1966).

Surficial soils in the project area today would best be characterized as urban land. This is the result of over 100 years of construction and demolition and the subsequent paving of the project area.

UNITED STATES – DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR – GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



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FEET

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
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TOPO LINES REPRESENT 10-FOOT CONTOURS

N

USGS QUADRANGLE
SAN ANTONIO EAST, 1992
SAN ANTONIO WEST, 1993
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Project Mngr: CPK	Project No.: 90077109	Terracon Consulting Engineers and Scientists	TOPOGRAPHIC VICINITY MAP	FIG. No.
Drawn By: SEG	Scale: AS SHOWN		ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY EMBASSY SUITES SOLEDAD ST. & EAST HOUSTON ST. SAN ANTONIO, TX	1
Checked By: MRF/CPK	File No.: AS-077109-1			
Approved By: SLN	Date: DECEMBER 2007	2855 Premiere Pkwy, Ste. C Duluth, Georgia 30097 (770) 623-0755 (770) 623-9628		

Previous Research

Archaeological Research

Terracon conducted a file review and records reviews of the Texas Historical Commission's Restricted Cultural Resource Information, the Texas Archaeological Sites Atlas, San Antonio Public Library, and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library prior to commencing fieldwork. This research was performed to identify previously recorded archaeological sites within the project area that may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

No known archaeological sites were discovered in the project area during the file and records review. However, two recorded archaeological sites were found in the online records of the Texas Historical Commission.

Site 41BX1369

This site is the historic location of Laux Mill, built ca. 1866 on the west bank of the San Antonio River 45 feet north of Travis Street. The structure later was used as a boarding house which stood until 1920. It is thought that part of the original mill race was incorporated into a water feature which is part of the River Walk. None of the mill is visible, however portion of it may be covered by the River Walk sidewalk. Parts of the mill dam are still visible in the river bottom.

According to the Atlas site form, River Walk designer Robert Hugman may have incorporated portions of the mill race into the water feature. The water feature extends into the river channel at an angle which suggests that part of the mill race was present when the water feature was constructed.

This site is not located within the boundaries of the project area. Therefore, the proposed project will have no effect on this site.

Site 41BX1370

This site is located on west bank of the San Antonio River beneath the Travis Street Bridge. It consists of a stratified trash deposit possibly associated with the 1842 home of William Jaques. According to the Atlas site form, whiteware with an 1896 maker's mark and a pharmacy bottle from a druggist in business 1895-1897 were found in the upper deposit. Banded slip, edgeware, flow blue, lead glazed, and unglazed sherds were recovered from the bottom deposit. Artifacts from the upper deposit are thought to date to the 1890s, while those from the bottom deposit and believed to be from the 1840s.

This site is not located within the boundaries of the project area. Therefore, the proposed project will have no effect on this site.

Geotechnical Research

Pervious geotechnical investigation was reviewed prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The report entitled "Geotechnical Engineering Study Embassy Suites Houston

& Soledad Streets San Antonio, Texas" was prepared by Drash Consulting Engineers, Inc. of San Antonio, Texas and dated August 11, 2006.

According to the Drash report, three strata were encountered in the borings. These strata are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Subsurface Stratigraphy			
Stratum	**Range in Depth**		**Stratum Description and Classification**
-	0 – 4 ft	0 – 1.2 m	Asphaltic concrete and granular base material
1	1 - 18	0.3 – 5.5	Fill: sandy clay; brown to gray brown; stiff to very stiff; with variable sandstone, brick, and wood deposits.
2	15 - 43	4.6 – 13.1	Clay: dark brown, tan and gray; very stiff to hard.
3	38 - 100	11.6 – 30.4	Shale; dark bluish gray; hard.

Based on the geotechnical evidence, if pre-1870s artifacts exist they are likely above stratum 2 and in the lower portion of stratum 1. Consequently, they would lie at a depth of 10 to 18 feet and not the 3 to 4 feet as anticipated by SAHPO.

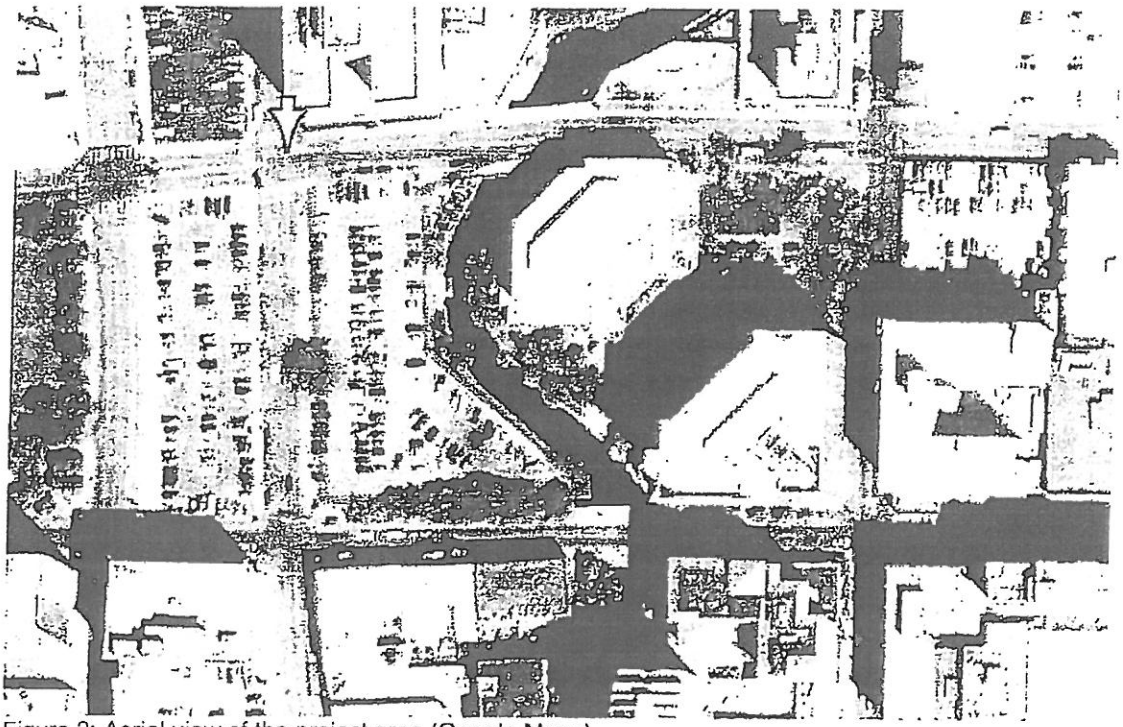
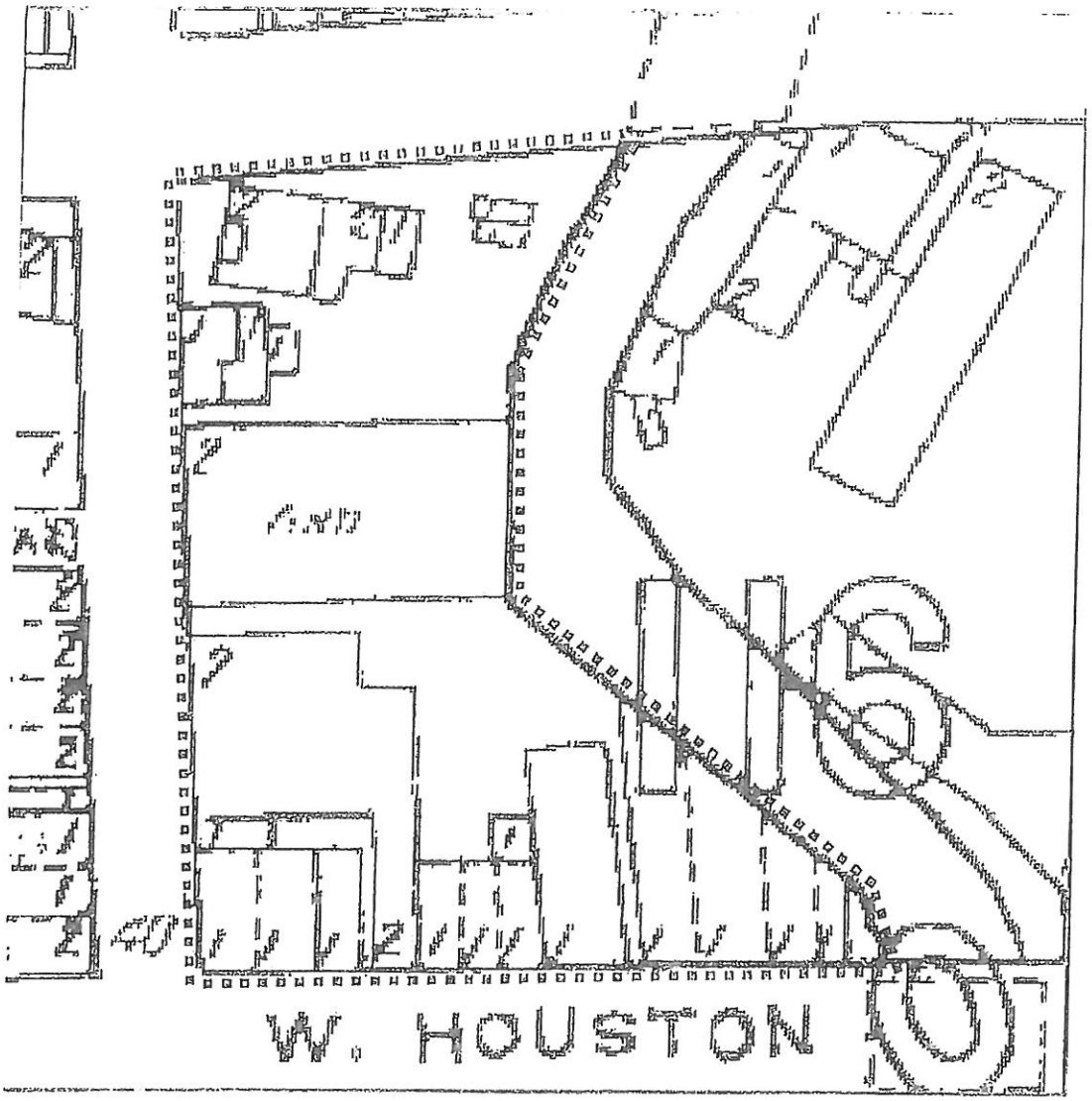


Figure 2: Aerial view of the project area (Google Maps)



= Project Area Boundaries

= Planned Backhoe Trenches

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BASED ON 1911 - 1924 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE CO. MAP

NOT TO SCALE

THIS DIAGRAM IS FOR GENERAL LOCATION ONLY, AND IS NOT INTENDED FOR CONSTRUCTION PURPOSES

Project Mngr: CPK	Project No. 90077109	Terracon Consulting Engineers and Scientists	ARCHEOLOGICAL BACKHOE TRENCHING PLAN
Drawn By: SEG	Scale: AS SHOWN		ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY EMBASSY SUITES SOLEDAD ST. & EAST HOUSTON ST. SAN ANTONIO, TX
Checked By: MRF/CPK	File No. AS90077109		
Approved By: SLN	Date: DECEMBER 2007	2855 Premiere Pkwy, Suite C Duluth, Georgia 30097 (770) 623-0755 (770) 623-9...	FIG. No. 3

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Background to the Siege of Béxar

The proposed Embassy Suites Hotel site is located in downtown San Antonio adjacent to an area where important events in the 1835 Siege of Béxar took place. What was to become San Antonio was founded as Villa de Béxar along with the San Antonio de Béxar Presidio and the Mission San Antonio de Valero in 1718 by Texas royal governor Martín de Alarcón.

San Antonio de Béxar was a frontier town on the northeast edge of New Spain and it, and the associated missions, served as a buffer between the Spanish empire and French holdings to the east in Louisiana. The town had grown to 1,600 inhabitants and it had developed a complex social fabric by the time of the Texas Revolution in 1835. Like many frontier towns, San Antonio developed a multicultural and multiethnic population with less social stratification than the hinterland (De La Teja 1995).

Barr (1990) has pointed out the importance of the capture of Béxar to the Texas Revolution. Not only was the Siege of Béxar the longest campaign of the revolution, it was the only major Texan victory other than San Jacinto. A brief review of the historical events of the early 1800s is necessary to put the Siege of Béxar into perspective and to relate historical events to the project area. This brief historical review was completed by relying on the following sources: Barr (1990), Churchill (1935), and Hardin (1994).

Mexico achieved independence form Spain in 1821 and the United States of Mexico was formed in 1824. The government of Mexico gave land grants in the state of Coahuila y Tejas to numerous American immigrants in order to populate the thinly-settled northern lands on the condition that they become Roman Catholic and Mexican citizens.

The Mexican government was overthrown in 1832 by General Antonio López de Santa Anna who, being a federalist, abrogated the 1824 constitution and began to concentrate political power in Mexico City. President Santa Anna's action caused rebellion in the state of Yucatán and the northern part of Coahuila y Tejas. While President Santa Anna was able to persuade Yucatán to recognize Mexico he was unable to persuade people in Tejas, the Texians.

President Santa Anna then dispatched troops under the command of General Martín Perfecto de Cós, his brother-in-law, to reinforce San Antonio de Béxar. General Cós arrived in San Antonio in October of 1835 and set about reinforcing the central plazas and the then abandoned Mission San Antonio de Valero (Alamo).

Texians under the command of Stephen F. Austin began moving towards San Antonio in mid October. On October 28th they were engaged by Cós' forces south of San Antonio at Mission Concepción where they were to emerge victorious. Austin then split his forces into two groups in order to lay siege to San Antonio. Half of the army stayed to the south of the city near the missions while the balance moved around to the north of the city.

Political bickering, in fighting, desertion, and drunkenness were rife among the Texians. Austin had a particularly difficult time because this was a "people's army" where officers were elected and strategies had to be agreed upon. The siege was to go on for seven weeks and during this time there was a great deal of dissension in the Texian camp as to whether they should attack or go into winter encampment. Attacks were planned but failed to materialize because not enough troops would participate.

Finally, on December 1st Cós released two Anglo Texians he had been holding. The two promptly went to the Texian's camp. These men, one of whom was an engineer, had considerable knowledge of the Mexican's defenses and weaknesses and they identified some vacant buildings on the north side of the city that could provide cover for an attack.

An attack was planned for dawn of December 4th; however it was thwarted when a shadowy figure was spotted talking with a Mexican sentry then entering the city. Fearing betrayal, the attack was called off and many of the men prepared to leave the city for winter quarters. Then a deserting Mexican cavalry officer brought news to the Texians that the morale of the Mexican troops had deteriorated to an exceptionally low point.

Heated discussion broke out over the merits of an immediate attack and it is at this time that Ben Milam stepped forward and shouted to the men: "Who will go with old Ben Milam into San Antonio?" Some 300 men answered Milam's call, while the others agreed to form a reserve and an artillery unit.

On December 5th at 5:00 A.M. Texian artillery started diversionary fire on the Alamo. Milam and the others began the attack. First the de la Garza home, located one block north of the Main Plaza, was seized. When the de la Garza home came under fire, the Veramendi home was also seized. On the second day of the fighting Ben Milam was killed by a sniper while in the garden of the Veramendi house (see Figure 4).

Over the course of the next few days the Texians would fight their way to the Main Plaza by moving from house to house. Sometimes doors and windows were pried or broken open and other times adobe walls were dug through. Eventually Cós was forced to retreat to the Alamo and sued for peace on December 9th and on the 11th the Texian troops voted to accept the surrender.

Archaeological Significance

Ms. Kay Hinds of the SAHPO pointed out that the project area was a part of the area occupied or traveled through during the Siege of Béxar in 1835 by the Texian army. The first major structure occupied by the Texians was the de la Garza house, which was located in the southwest corner of the intersection of East Houston Street and Soledad Street. This would place the house some 50 to 100 m from the southwest corner of the project area. The Veramendi house was the second structure taken by the Texians and it was located approximately 50 m south of the project area. It stood south of East Houston Street (across the street from the project area) and east of Soledad Street. Both of these houses were linked by a network of trenches during the battle.

The proposed project area would have been well traversed during the battle and could also have been used for staging and re-supply efforts.

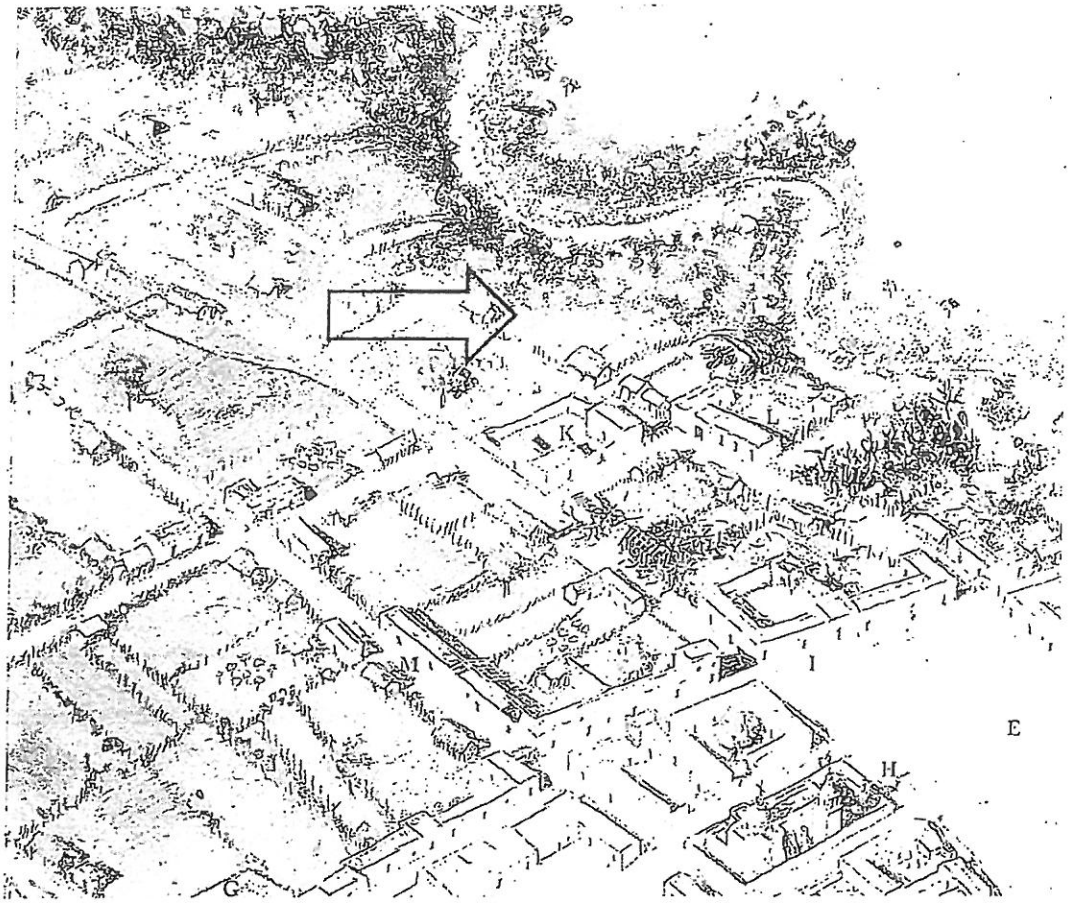


Figure 4: Detail from George S. Nelson's painting entitled "San Antonio de Bejar 1836". The de la Garza house is indicated with 'K' while the Veramendi house is indicated with 'L'. The proposed project area (indicated by an arrow) is north of the Veramendi house, east of Soledad Street and west of the river.

III. METHODS, RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Methods

Backhoe testing was conducted by Christopher P. Koch, principal investigator and Donald L. Frazier of Terracon, with the assistance of M&M Excavating Services December 3rd through 7th, 2007. A recent previous backhoe investigation on the eastern edge of the Battle of Concepción was consulted (Meissner 2007) in preparation for this project. Visual examination of exposed trenches was conducted in conjunction with the deep mechanical excavation of eight trenches.

Six mechanically excavated trenches were planned at locations selected in consultation with SAHPO (see Figure 3). However, for reasons explained below, the placement of some of the trenches had to be altered. Trenches were excavated using a 76,500 lb (34,700 kg) Kobelco SK330LC Dynamic Acera hydraulic excavator equipped with a general purpose 1.5 yard^3 (1.146 m^3) tooth bucket. The toothed bucket was sufficient for breaking the pavement and asphalt in most of the project area. However, at the northern end of the project area a thick layer of concrete required that the bucket be replaced with a five ton hydraulic hammer.

Results

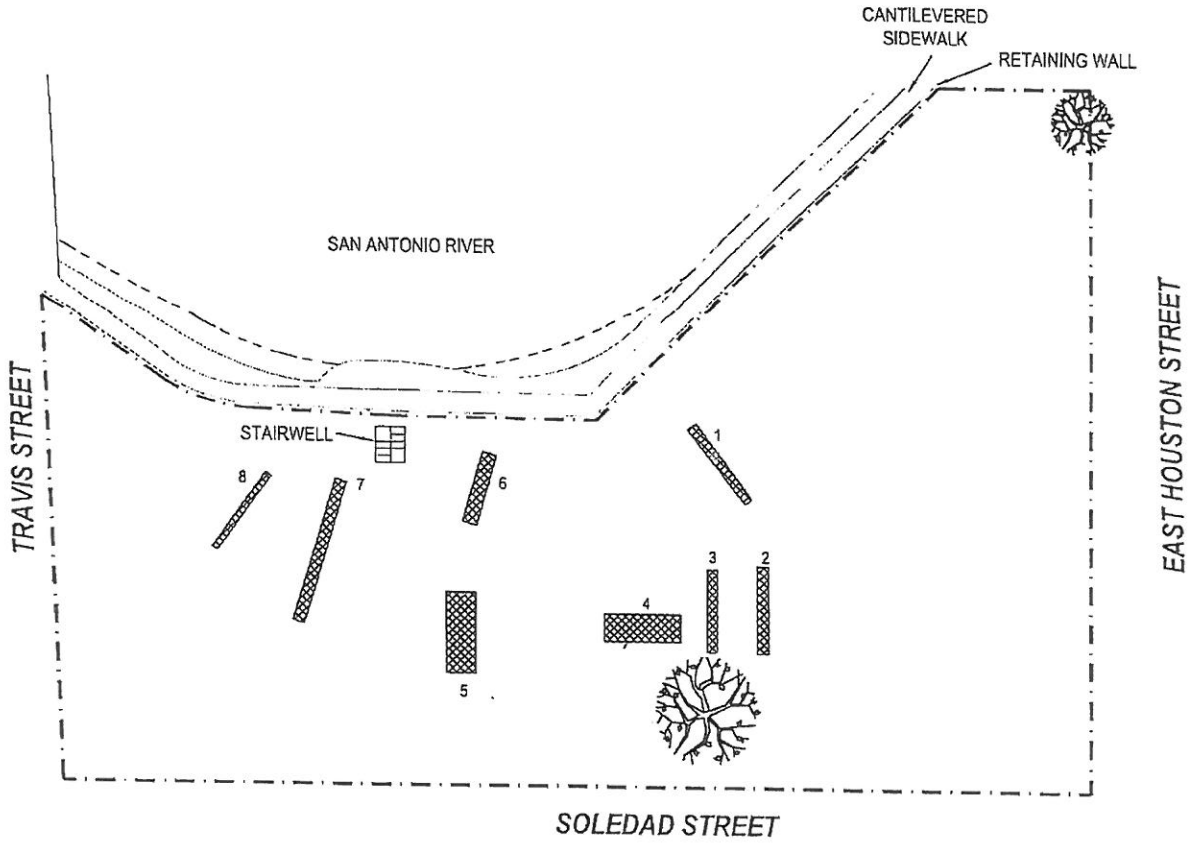
Eight backhoe trenches (BHT) were dug, which ranged in length from 8 to 16 m, depth 20 cm to 8 m, and width 1 to 3 m (see Table 2 and Figures 5 and 6). The BHT walls were observed during excavation and spoils were examined for artifacts. Representative stratigraphic sections were measured for each trench and photographs were taken. When BHTs needed to be entered, they were widened and stepped back and spoil was removed from the edges for safety.

Table 2: Dimensions of Excavated Backhoe Trenches

BHT	Length Width Depth	Comments
1	10 x 1 x 6 m	
2	10 x 1 x 3 m	
3	10 x 1 x 0.3 m	Reinforced concrete encountered and BHT abandoned
4	8 x 3 x 2.6 m	1 m BHT stepped back 1 m each side to permit inspection
5	10 x 3 x 3 m	1 m BHT stepped back 1 m each side to permit inspection
6	8 x 1.5 x 8 m	
7	16 x 1.5 x 6 m	
8	10 x 1 x 3 m	West 2 m not excavated because of concrete pier or wall

Generalized Stratigraphy

The stratigraphy across the project area was relatively uniform though the depth of various units differed. The generalized stratigraphy of each of the trenches is shown in Figure 5 and a discussion of the project area at large is presented below followed by comments on individual trenches.



N

0 20

Approximate Scale (Meter)

LEGEND

SUBJECT SITE

BACKHOE TRENCHING

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Project Mngr:	CPK
Drawn By:	SEG
Checked By:	MRF/CPK
Approved By:	SLN
Project No.	90077109
Scale:	AS SHOWN
File No.	AS90077109-5
Date:	DECEMBER 2007

Terracon
Consulting Engineers and Scientists
2855 Premiere Parkway, Suite C Duluth, Georgia 30097
(770) 623-0755 (770) 623-9628

SITE DIAGRAM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY
EMBASSY SUITES
SOLEDAD ST. & EAST HOUSTON ST.
SAN ANTONIO, TX

FIG. No. 5

The site is currently used as a paved parking lot. Consequently, the whole of the project area is covered with one or more layers of asphalt. At the north end of the project area the asphalt is underlain by reinforced concrete. This stratum is not depicted on Figure 6 except where reinforced concrete was encountered.

Stratum 2 is a level of pink (7.5YR 7/3) very coarse (> 10 mm) limestone gravel fill which is homogenous and uniform across the project area.

The next stratum is a layer of black asphalt paving that was encountered over most of the project area. This layer is absent from BHT 2 and 4, perhaps because structures stood in the vicinity.

The fourth stratum is a diverse collection of multiple demolition and burial episodes of what is primarily 19th and 20th century debris. Multiple burial episodes have yielded diverse textural and color variation ranging from grays (2.5YR 5/1, 6/1), to dark olive brown (2.5YR 3/3) to light olive brown (2.5YR 5/3), and light yellow brown (2.5YR 6/4) soils. This level contains bricks, pieces of wood and other structural remains as well as artifacts of everyday use such as bottles, metal fragments, and occasionally animal bones. If pre-1870s deposits exist in the project area, they should be located at the base of this stratum.

Stratum 5 is a homogenous layer of very dark greenish gray (3/1 5GY) alluvial clay which is sterile and appears to be *in situ*.

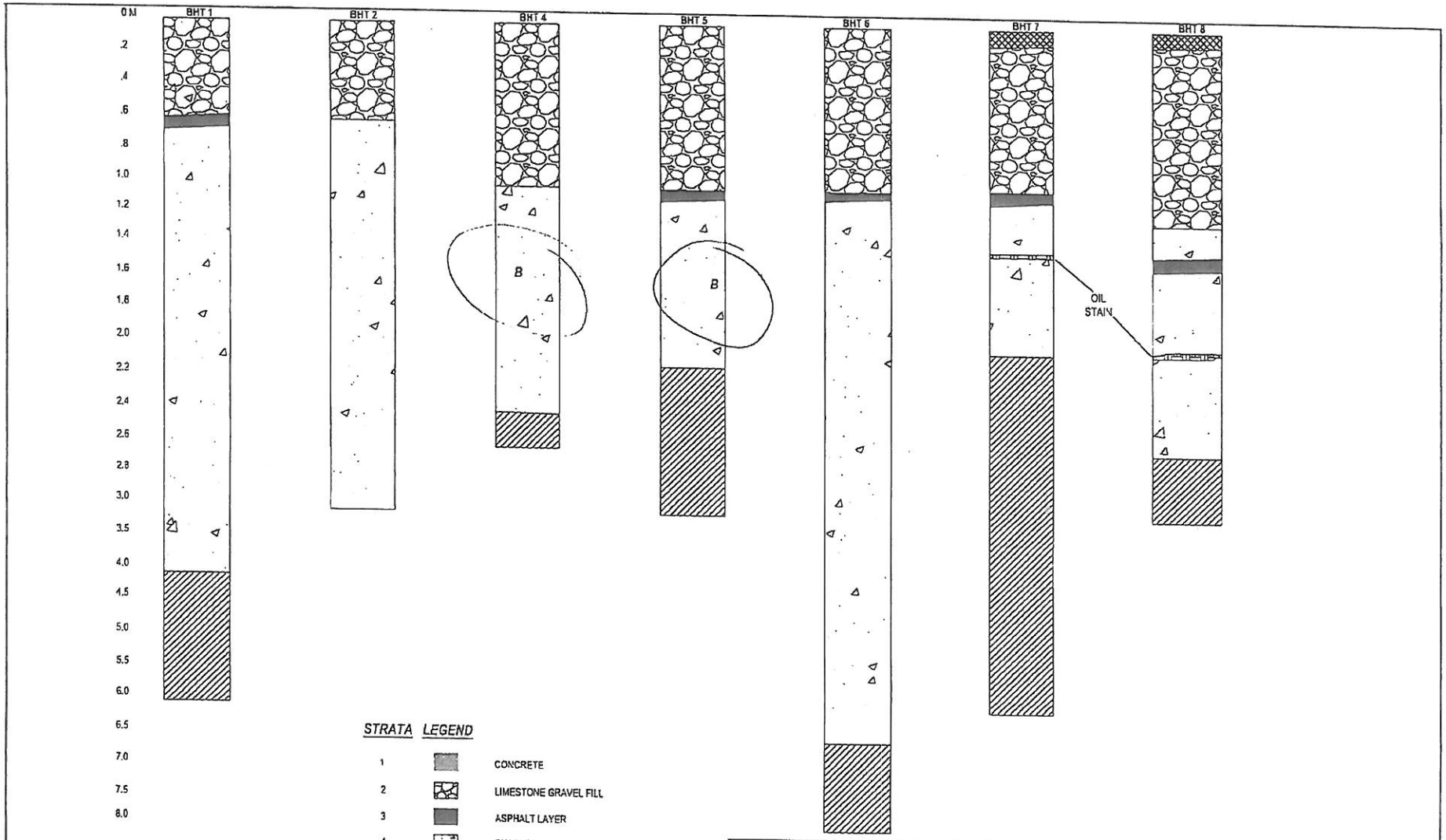
BHT 1

This trench was located near the center of the project area and it was oriented northeast/southwest. This area was identified on the 1911 to 1924 Sanborn Insurance map as an area that might not have 19th century development.

BHT 1 was excavated to a depth of 6 m and was composed of four strata. Stratum 1 was limestone gravel fill followed by a layer of asphalt paving. Stratum 3 was a thick layer of 19th century rubble which was underlain by alluvial clay. The thickness of the rubble layer may have been cause by demolition debris that was pushed onto a sloping river bank.

BHT 2

This trench was located in the south central portion of the project area and was oriented east-west. This area was identified on the 1911 to 1924 Sanborn Insurance map as a space or laneway between buildings. BHT 2 was excavated to a depth of 3 m. Excavation was stopped at this point because it was realized that the trench was located too far south to find the laneway. BHT 2 contained strata 1, 2, and 3. Strata 3, the rubble layer, contained abundant demolition materials (see Photos 1, 2, and 3).



Project Mgr: CPK	Project No.: 90077109	Terracon Consulting Engineers and Scientists	STRATIGRAPHIC PROFILES OF BACKHOE TRENCHES ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY EMBASSY SUITES SOLEDAD ST. & EAST HOUSTON ST. SAN ANTONIO, TX	FIG. No. 6
Drawn By: SEG	Scale: AS SHOWN			
Checked By: MRF/CPK	File No.: ASSET Filed			
Approved By: SLN	Date: JANUARY 2008			

BHT 3

BHT 3 was opened approximately 5 m north of BHT 2 in an attempt to locate the laneway. This trench was abandoned at 20 cm to 30 cm depth because an impenetrable layer of reinforced concrete was encountered the entire length of the trench (Photo 4).

BHT 4

BHT 4 was opened 3 to 4 m north of BHT 3 and was oriented north-south in order to try to find the laneway. The trench was excavated to a depth of approximately 2 m when animal bones were spotted among demolition rubble in the west profile. The trench was deepened to 2.6 m to expose better the cultural remains and it was widened by stepping it back. BHT 4 was stepped back and the spoil piles were moved 1 m from the excavation. The excavation was then entered and it was confirmed that the cultural debris and associated animal bones, most likely cow, were 19th century (Photo 5).

BHT 5

BHT 5 was located in the north central portion of the project area approximately 15 m north of BHT4. Once again the placement of this trench was planned to intersect a space or laneway between buildings on the old Sanborn maps. This trench was very similar to BHT 4 and once again bone material was spotted among the demolition debris. The trench was widened by stepping it back and spoils were removed from the edge of the excavation (Photos 6 and 7). The trench was entered and the debris and cow bones were determined to be of 19th century origin.

BHT 5 was excavated to a depth of 3 m where sterile clay was encountered. Interestingly its rubble layer was one of the thinnest (approximately 1 m) of all the trenches. This is most like due to the original topography which sloped towards the river.

BHT 6

BHT 6 was located between BHT 5 and the River Walk. Once again the placement of the trench was an attempt to locate land that was not built upon in the 19th century. BHT 6 was excavated to a depth of 8 m and it was the deepest excavation in the project. This trench also had the thickest rubble layer of all the trenches, extending to a depth of 6.5 m. Like all the other trenches, this rubble was most likely composed of several episodes of demolition as bricks and other structural elements were numerous (Photo 8). The thickness of the rubble layer, similar to BHT 1, is most likely due to the original slope towards the river.

BHTs 7 and 8

BHT 7 and BHT 8 were originally planned to be placed further north and closer to Travis Street in order to examine vacant land that lies behind structures on the old Sanborn map. However, the clawed bucket of the excavator was unable to break through a 30 to 40 cm level of reinforced concrete. Therefore, the bucket of the excavator was substituted for a five-ton hydraulic hammer (Photo 9). It soon became apparent that, even with the aid of the hammer, it was not practical to proceed. Consequently, trenches 7 and 8 were shifted south six or seven meters.

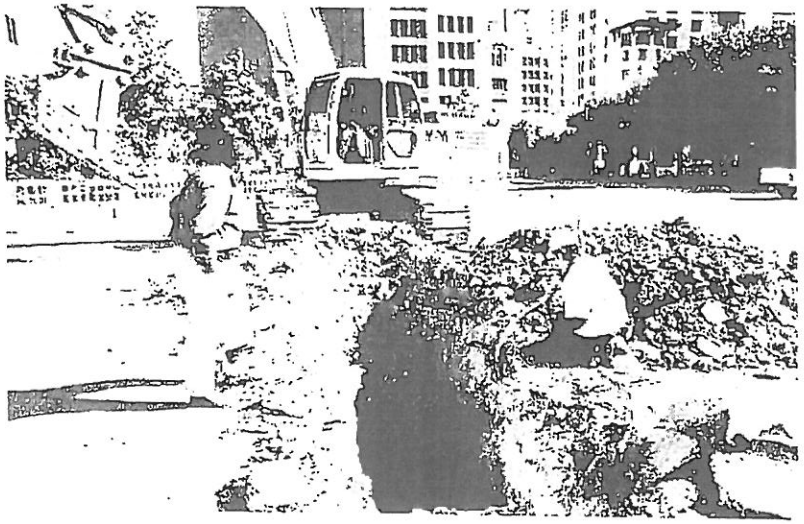


Photo 1: East view of the excavation of BHT 2.

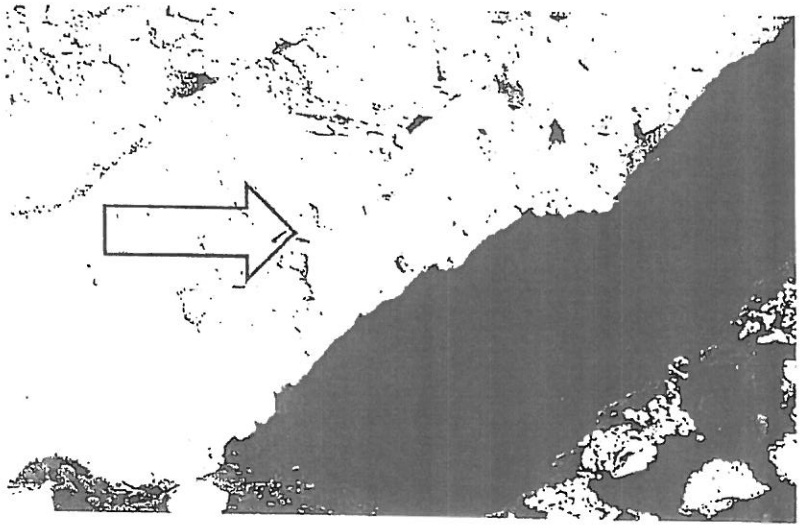


Photo 2: Brick foundation wall in the north profile of BHT 2

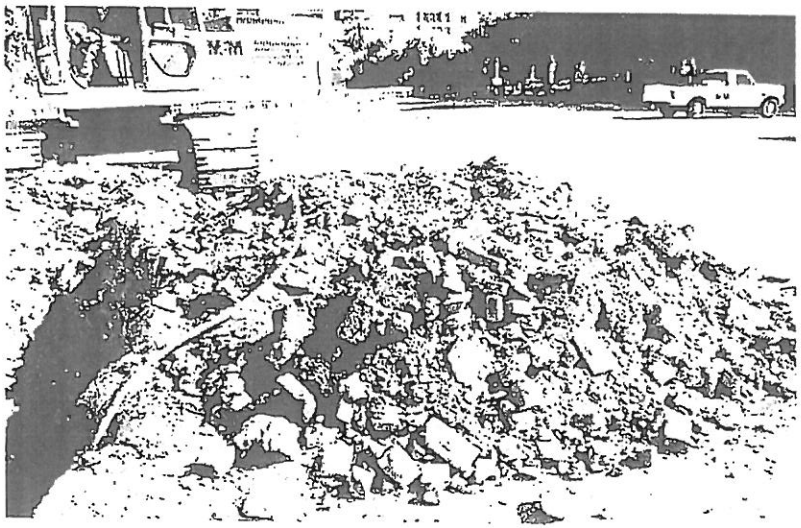


Photo 3: Typical spoil from the rubble layer of BHT 2

Photo 4: Reinforced concrete encountered in BHT 3

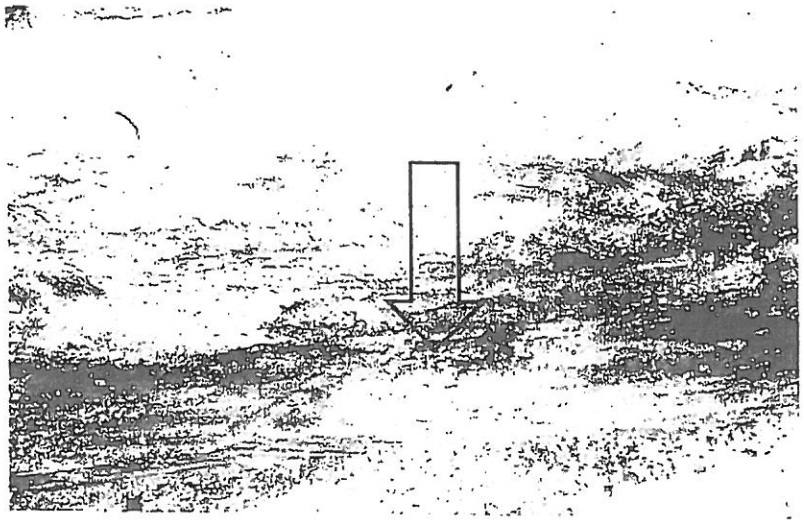


Photo 5: North profile of BHT 4 showing cow bone *in situ*

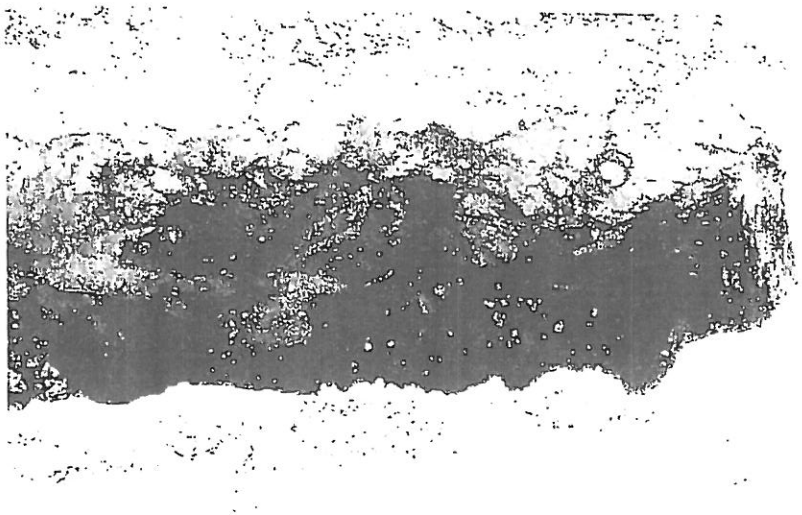


Photo 6: Rubble in north profile of BHT 5

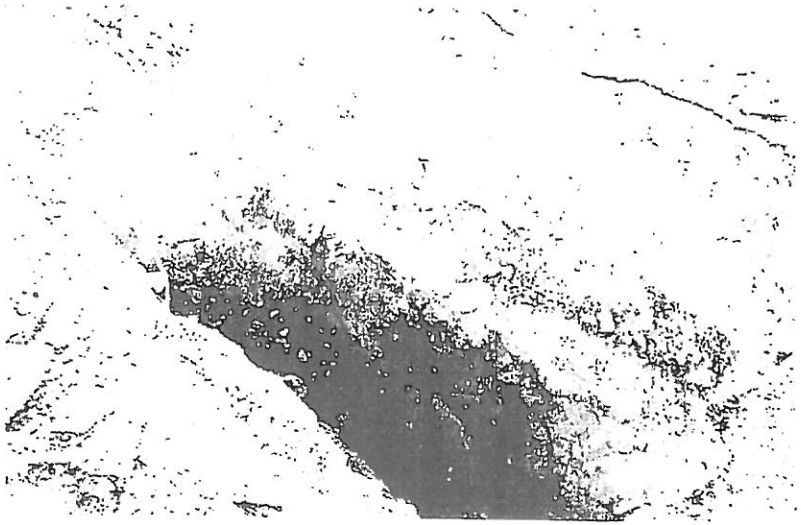


Photo 7: North profile BHT 5

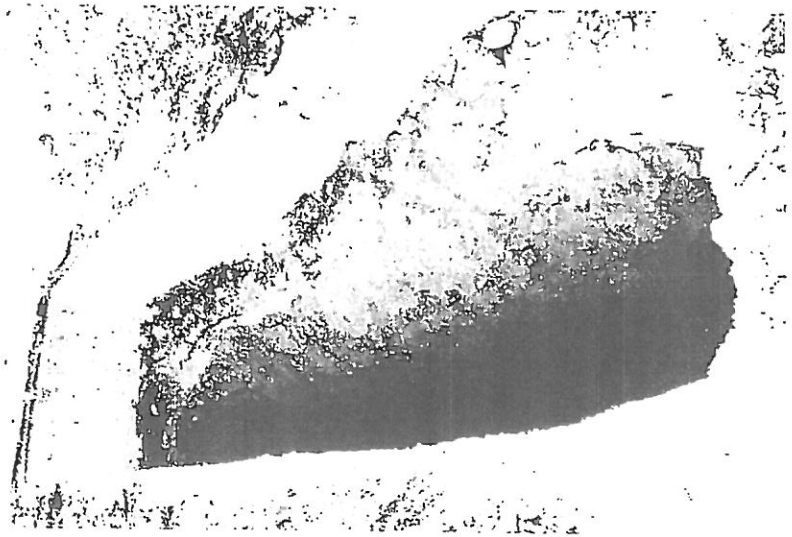


Photo 8: North profile of BHT 6

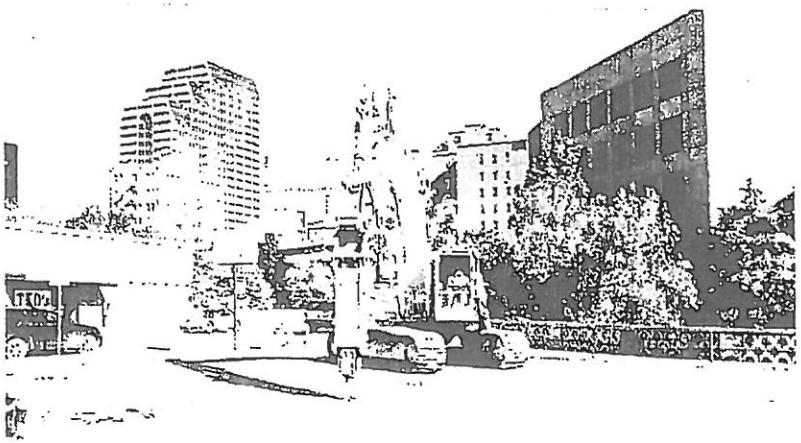


Photo 9: Hydraulic hammer braking reinforced concrete for BHT 7

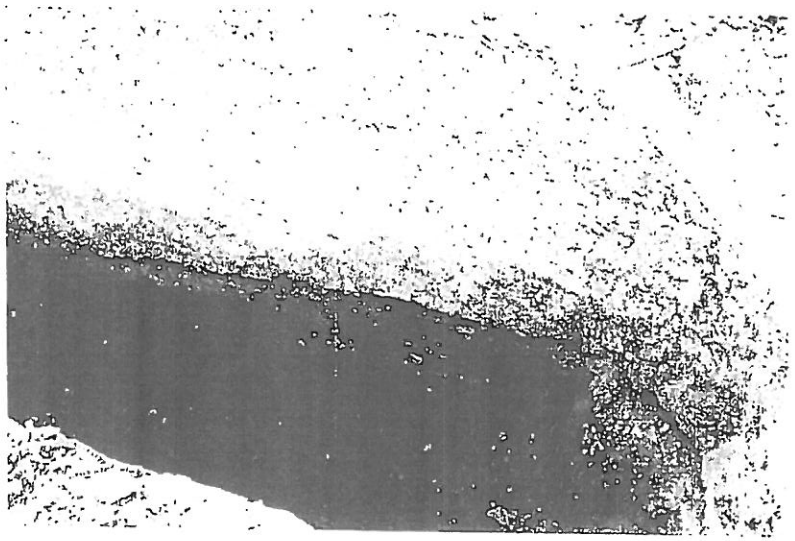


Photo 10: North profile of BHT 7 showing limestone gravel fill

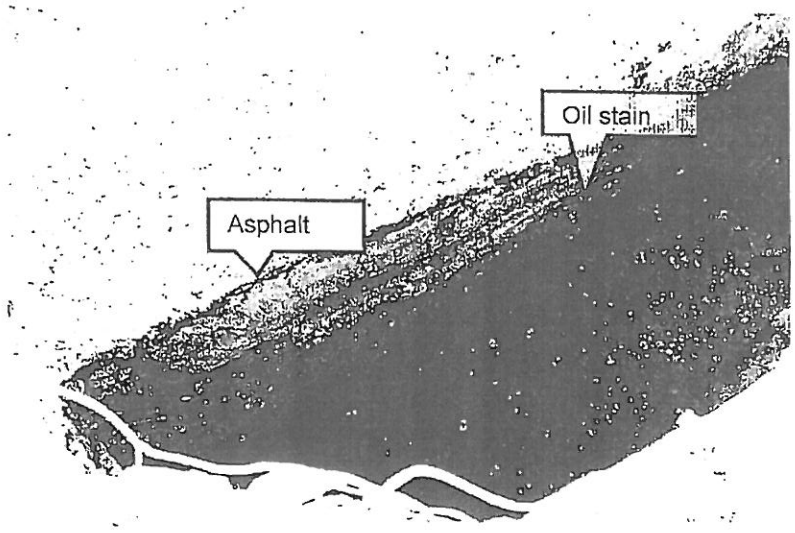


Photo 11: South profile of BHT 8 note asphalt and oil stain

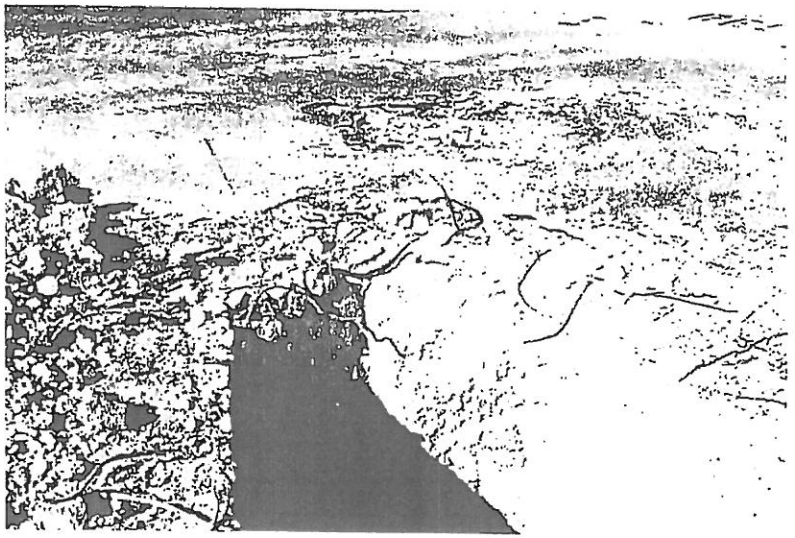


Photo 12: Reinforced concrete west end of BHT 8

BHT 7

This trench was started by breaking the 10 to 20 cm reinforced concrete layer into pieces with the hydraulic hammer followed by excavation with the toothed bucket to a depth of 6 m. This trench contained the thinnest rubble layer (0.9 m) of all the trenches. An odoriferous petroleum stain was found near the middle of the rubble layer (Photo 10).

BHT 8

This trench was excavated with both the hammer and clawed bucket in the same manner as BHT 7. BHT 8 is the northernmost trench excavated. It was originally planned to be 10 m long, however because of a thick layer of reinforced concrete (perhaps a pier or wall), the western 2 m were not excavated.

BHT 8 was excavated to a depth of 3 m and like BHT 7 it contained an odoriferous petroleum stain near the middle of the rubble layer. This trench is unique in that it contains a rubble layer both beneath and on top of the asphalt layer (Photos 11 and 12).

Interpretation

The phases of depositional history in the project area may be summarized as follows.

Alluvial clay is deposited by the meandering San Antonio River on top of shale. Multiple cycles of late 19th and 20th century construction and demolition take place. In the early 19th century, prior to the River Walk, much of the then land surface is paved with asphalt. This paving event may coincide with the early development of the river park and the first retaining wall along the river adjacent to the project area (Fisher 2007).

The current grade level was likely achieved in the late 1930s when the retaining wall was heightened and the cantilevered sidewalk and the public stairway were added. The uniform limestone gravel overlaying the rubble and asphalt was deposited as backfill behind the heightened retaining wall.

Summary and Recommendations

Terracon was contracted by Rio Blanco to conduct an archaeological backhoe survey of an approximately 0.81-ha (2-acre) tract of land to determine the presence of pre-1870 artifacts and deposits. It is proposed that the tract be developed with an Embassy Suites riverfront hotel, which will be located between Travis Street to the north, the San Antonio River Walk to the east, East Houston Street to the south, and Soledad Street to the west in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The project area is currently developed with a paved parking lot.

A file and records review of the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Archaeological Sites Atlas and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library was conducted prior to commencing of fieldwork. This review identified no recorded archaeological sites located within the project area. Two archaeological sites were recorded just north and

outside of the project area. However they will not be disturbed by the proposed project. Therefore, no known archeological sites would be affected by the proposed project.

Eight backhoe trenches were excavated to varying depths of 2.6 m to 8 m. Site stratigraphy is composed of five strata. Stratum 1 is a surficial layer of asphalt and concrete. Stratum 2 is a level of pink very coarse limestone gravel fill. Stratum 3 is a layer of black asphalt paving. The fourth stratum is a diverse collection of multiple demolition and burial episodes of what is primarily 19th and 20th century debris. Stratum 5 is a homogenous layer of very dark greenish gray *in situ* sterile alluvial clay.

Artifacts observed are consistent with a late 19th and 20th century date. No pre-1870 archaeological materials were discovered from any of the eight mechanically excavated trenches.

In light of the foregoing, Terracon recommends no further archaeological study of the project area at this time.

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